

Bible, Debates and Beliefs

Text: 2 TIMOTHY 3:16

In the latest issue of Christianity Today, there is an article entitled, "The Modern Debate Around the Bible", by Klaas Runia. Dr. Runia is a professor at the Reformed Theological College in Australia. The article he wrote dovetails and parallels some of the schooling which I received at Lancaster Seminary. There is much argument and debate today about the Bible. The debate is not so much about the authors of the Bible but of the beliefs entailed with these books of the Bible. There always has been criticism of the Bible and no one has ever argued that this should not be so. Any literary work of any merit has always had its share of critics. Indeed were the Bible never involved in criticism it could hardly be worthy of the place which it has held for so many years. But we need to look at the criticism being leveled against it and then decide where we stand in our thinking. We need to discover what it is we believe, about the questions that have been raised, and which are being raised at the present time.

There are at the present time as has been the custom three schools of thought. The conservative, the in between, and the radical, or extreme position. Karl Barth for example is considered as a conservative thinker and Rudolf Bultmann is an extremist. We shall deal with some of the thinking of these two sides and not bother with the in betweens.

Both of these men agree on one basic thing and that is, that the Bible is a human book, that is written by men. Barth states, "The prophets and apostles as such, even in their office, even in their function as witnesses, even in the act of writing down their witness, were real, historical men as we are, and therefore sinful in their action, and capable and actually guilty of error in their spoken and written word." Unquote. Bultmann agrees that the Bible is a thoroughly human book. However he goes much further in his views in criticizing the Biblical texts. But beyond this the agreement between the two

ends. Bultmann has stated that the Bible must be stripped of its myths. He gave a lecture on, "The New Testament and Mythology," and according to him the Bible is full of mythical conceptions and representations that are unacceptable for modern man. Many of our leading theologians follow along with this thinking and belong to this school of thought. Some have even gone so far as to say that the traditional idea of God, based on the Bible, is dead. This new interpretation means that what is supernatural in the Bible can no longer be accepted.

All of the miracles in the Old and the New Testaments must be rejected as myths. This is also true of the miracles of Jesus. Further there never was a real incarnation. God never became man through Jesus, ^{BUT} Because Jesus was nothing else than an ordinary man in whom God was present in a special way. This also knocks out the belief in the Virgin Birth. This was nothing more than a legend. Then too we cannot take the resurrection of Jesus nor His Ascension too seriously either. These are all myths according to some of the leading theologians and serious thinkers about the Bible. But why is this so? Does not the Bible describe them as facts? Modern theologians do not deny this but they say that the men who wrote the Bible were telling it in their primitive way. These people thought of the universe as being three storied. Many people today still think this way. The earth is in the center of this structure, the heaven is above and the underworld is beneath. Heaven is the abode of God and His angels. The underworld is Hell the place of torment. The earth is the scene of the supernatural activity of God and His angels and Satan and his demons.

Those who believe in this picture can very easily believe in for modern man miracles. But you see it is impossible ^A to believe in such a picture.

Bultmann has stated the real thinking of his theology when he states, quote, "It is impossible to use electric lights and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of demons and spirits." Unquote. It is here that we gain a glimpse of what many people are thinking. We are living in a very scientific age, and therefore we all want to think scientifically. In fact

some of this thinking is being taught to our seminary students at Lancaster. One of the faculty professors taught a course while I was there and it had to do with the present belief crisis in religion. One of the major points this man brought out was that things that can be proved can be believed otherwise they are more or less untrue. He brought out rather strongly that the only way to look at things and the only light that can be shed is by the scientific method of doing things. The way of science is to not believe something until it can be proved. But this way is very irritating to those modern men who still believe very strongly in some of the Biblical so called myths. But if we look at our world we can readily see the ~~science~~ picture. *SCIENCE PAINTS*

We see machines doing things that no one ever thought they could do. We have come from the days of the horse and buggy to traveling in space in about a hundred years. In the past sixty years there have been more developments than there were in the previous centuries combined. Things are moving at such a pace that one new thing comes along and is replaced by something else before it even becomes well known. Medical science has made great strides in the past several years. We need but to point to the use of parts of the body that are being transplanted in people. Is it any wonder then that we are being tempted to say along with some of the critics, O.K. now I have believed in the story of Noah, and I want to see it proved. Or we have always believed the story of the birth of Jesus and now we want it proved to our satisfaction that it happened just like it is stated. Well you can readily see that this is pure nonsense. But this is just about how many people are acting. ~~But~~ The truth of the matter is that it is still a case of not being able to see the forest for the trees. Facts that are being uncovered today may disprove many things of the Bible. There will probably be many more facts discovered in the next several years that will further disprove some parts of the Bible. But, ~~and~~ these facts need not destroy our faith and our belief. These proven things do not mean that the Bible is a lie. It still merely shows that these human writers tried as best they could to relate what happened as they saw it or heard about it. We must continue to search for God's truth wherever we can find it. And we can still find

it in the Bible. The Bible can and does speak to men as it has down through these many years. We need not be a scientist with a scientific degree to understand it either. We can take those parts which we feel are myths and accept them for being such and still gain some insight and strength from them. We can choose to believe those stories we want and we can choose to disbelieve those we really don't believe. It is as simple as that. Either way we can still be as strong in our faith providing of course that we do not forget to tune in to God's wavelength and try to have Him speak to us.

To limit God and say He is up here someplace is to really be narrow in our thinking. I think this is where we need to get away from the three storied structure viewpoint if we are to think of God in the proper way. We must begin to think of a God who can be with you and me and everyone else. A god who cannot be explained and who is not confined to one place pushing levers and pulling strings to keep the universe on an even keel. A god who is not to be confused with robots or to be thought of as being held motionless in one place catering to every whim and prayer of mankind. This is the wrong kind of God. Because we live in a world that is much more scientific than a hundred years ago we must ^{also} update our theological thinking ~~also~~. God must be thought of in the ways that ~~we~~ can best explain Him ^{when we} think of Him. This does not mean that God is destroyed for us, nor does it mean that He does not exist. Rather it should make Him more real and alive than ever before.

The danger with all this scientific thinking is the fact that we begin to rely on man more than we rely on God. Take the field of phsiciatry as a good illustration. Many people go to a phsiciatrist today like some people go to a regular doctor. It is an easy thing to do and no one thinks too much about it. And after all as long as someone can be helped this way, there should be no stigma attached to it at all. But the point I am making is this. Some of these people will go to a Dr. Jones we will say and he helpes them with their roblem. Now because of the fact that they can see Dr. Jones and talk to him and he can give them the help they need they begin to look upon him as sorteof a god. After all God is not seen by anyone and how can we prove He even exists? Dr. Jones

St. John 'S Emleton 11:00 7/7/68

*Processional Hymn 11
*Call to Worship Pg. 188
*Confession of Sin
*Assurance of Pardon
Responsive Reading Sel. 64 Pg. 611
Hymn 199
Scripture 2 Timothy 3: 14-17
2 Peter 1: 16-21
*Gloria Patri
*Apostles Creed
*Pastoral Prayer & Response
Anthem
Announcements

Offering & Prayer

*Hymn 270
Sermon
Prayer & Lord's Prayer
*Hymn 427
Benediction
Threefold Amen
*Postlude

Salem Lamartine 9:30 7/7/68

Processional Hymn 184
*Call to Worship Pg. 188
*Confession of Sin
*Assurance of Pardon
Scripture 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17
*Gloria Patri 2 PETER 1:16-21
*Apostles Creed
*Pastoral Prayer
Anthem
Announcements
YOUTH FELL 6:30

Offering, Response, Prayer

Hymn 246
Sermon
Prayer & Lord's Prayer
*Hymn 469
Benediction
*Threefold Amen
*Postlude

"Choose"

There are glad songs,
There are sad songs,
Choose, my darling, choose.

Now or never,
Still forever,
Choose, my darling, choose.

There's the playful hit and run love,
There's the faithful true to one love,
But when all is said and done love,
You must choose; you must choose.

Is it sharing or not caring?
Choose, we have to choose.

~~Will~~ there be kids,
Two or three kids?
Choose, it's hard to choose.

Will they grow up in a fair world?
Will it blow up; do you care world?
This is our world; is it their world?
We must choose.

There are glad songs,
There are sad songs,
Choose, come on and choose.

Now or never,
Still forever,
Choose, we all must choose.

I have chosen; you are my love,
Is our future worth a try love?
On this world we'll keep an eye love,
If it's me, you should choose.
Time to choose-NOW!